

Dropping In by oogonium

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Summary:

It's more reliable to keep memories of her, but it's easy to forget just how deep muscle memory goes.

Dropping In

It turns out eight years of hard work and a shining recommendation from the one and only James Hopper can really take you places. Sure, add in some belated government "thanks for not ratting us out" favors and things probably would have moved a lot faster, but as Steve leans against the balcony railing he can't help but feel a swell of pride at where he finally is in life. He still feels his heart flutter as the sun sets over the horizon and the Chicago skyline begins to flicker to life, just like his first night. The sounds of the party behind him carry on, embodying a world he only got tastes of when he was younger; chilled champagne, silver, and caviar. He would have never imagined that a good first impression and a few well-placed pickup lines could open a door like this. The door behind him slides open and he feels a gentle hand on his shoulder,

"Steven, baby, are you feeling alright?"

He turns around to look at Samantha, the corners of his mouth tugging up as he places his hand over hers, "Peachy keen." She laughs at this, placing her other hand on his chest. "Come back to the party then, we miss you." Steve can feel his smile grow into a grin as she leads him back indoors, back to the beginning of a great party.

He ends up crashing on Samantha's bed, dress shirt unbuttoned, jacket and shoes missing since about one a.m. In hindsight, it was definitely Axel dropping something expensive and heavy on his way out that woke him up, but in the moment the crash transmutes into a demodog flinging its body against the side of the school bus, startling him into an upright position. He holds his breath, reminding himself of where he is and what he's doing there. Reminding himself that Hawkins is miles away and that his real work finished years ago. The digital clock next to him reads four-thirty a.m.- far too early for anyone to actually be awake, but late enough to explain a short trip to the bathroom. Steve continues to listen. It's quiet. It's probably fine. It's probably nothing. He decides he'd be better off double-checking anyway.

The living room looks pretty much like he remembers it, except someone's cleaned up all the trays and crystal glasses. He peeks into

the kitchen; nothing out of place- not a single sign that a party's just ended. He pulls a knife from the drying rack and decides to make his way through the rest of the rooms. It's only when he reaches the study that his hunch seems to pay off. The only room it the penthouse to be locked at the beginning of the night has its door wide open and from where he stands he can feel an outside breeze coming through into the hallway. Steve switches the knife to his dominant hand before pushing the door fully open. It's empty. Slowly, as silently as he can, he makes his way in.

"Hello, Steven."

He's not sure where the feeling of whiplash comes from, the speed at which he manages to turn or the sudden image of Kali sitting on the desk, legs crossed and head cocked to the side, almost identical to what she looked like when he last saw her.

"I forgot how much of a jumper you were," she murmurs, twirling what looks like a letter opener between her hands. He's still too shocked to even consider coming up with a witty comeback, nearly frozen to where he stands.

"Really, not even a hello, after all this time?"

"How- how do I know this is really you?" he could wince at how rough his voice sounds. Instead of commenting, she simply places the letter opener back onto the desk and walks over to him. Without breaking eye contact, she curls her hand around his, taking the kitchen knife from his grip and tossing it away. She doesn't let go of his hand, but whispers "Is this real enough?". His mouth goes dry. They share a beat of silence.

"What are you doing here?"

"I could ask you the same thing, Steven."

" *Kali* "

She shrugs once, "A girl's gotta eat." Her face remains impassive as he snatches his hand away. "You mean you're *robbing* this place?!" He doesn't know why it comes out as a whisper instead of a yell. He tries not to think about it. She just smiles at him, catlike. "I guess crime's only pretty when you're not seeing it happen in front of you." He can feel himself go tense. "These are good people, Kali, don't-"

"Good people? Really?" She steps away from him and starts to pace around the room, "Can people amass millions of dollars and still be good? Can people be the corporate heads of a corrupt state and still be good?"

He tries not to let his words come out too loudly as he responds, "That's not the point I'm trying to make." She spins around to look back at him, "Then what is your point?". He looks back towards the hallway before answering, "My point is, whatever these people may or may not do, they don't deserve to be injured or held hostage like this. I thought you were better than that." She stares at him for a moment, and then she laughs. He surprises himself with how quickly he crosses the room to cover her mouth. He tries to push down the panic he feels for her and ignores what the feeling probably means. Steve can still feel her smiling under the palm of his hand. When he reassures himself that no one's woken up, he pulls away and glares at her.

"I assure you, no one will get hurt. In fact, we were pretty much done by the time you began to play hero." His mouth twists into a frown, "Then what are you still doing here?" She blinks up at him, unmoved, "I wanted to say hello."

They're too close to each other, even for the situation they're in. He can see each individual lash, the spots where her eyeliner has rubbed off, the way her pupils expand ever so slightly. She trails her hand up the side of his arm, and he does his best to suppress the shiver he can feel growing at the base of his spine. She rests her hand on his shoulder.

"So, hello, Steve."

His hands move to her wrist, pulling her arm back in between their bodies. "You're not being fair." his voice still sounds too rough. She

covers his hand with hers. "From what I remember, you used to enjoy a challenge." He tells himself he has to focus on her mouth in order to hear what she's saying. Kali's too quiet. The room is too quiet. The world is covered in silence.

The first time she ever kissed him, she said it was out of boredom. She perched herself on the edge of his work desk in the middle of the graveyard shift. She pulled the coffee cup from his mouth and shut the case file he had been reading. She knew he was long over Nancy, she knew he hadn't been seeing anyone. She tipped his chin up, slowly and softly, waiting for him to pull back. She leaned down her breath ghosting over his lips- peppermint and tobacco. She whispered, "Is this okay?". He doesn't remember hearing his "yes", but he remembers the feeling of the word, the feeling of his mouth- so close to hers- as he mouthed it against her lips.

The last time he kissed her, it had felt like a goodbye. They had stayed up to watch the sunrise- wrapped in his sheets, facing the windows. He had said goodbye to the slope of her neck, to the dip of her collarbone. Had ghosted his fingers over the tip of her nose and the edges of her lashes, the ridge of her lips. Her goodbyes left marks. One on his shoulder, one on his hip, one on the side of his neck. Perfect bite marks, imprints of the smile he loved- all teeth and no hesitation.

In the middle of the night, sometimes, he convinces himself he can still feel the pattern of her bite on his skin and traces his fingers over it absently, again and again.

When his hands slide up to her hips and her lips meet his, the world feels like it's too loud. His heart pumps wildly, a hundred sunsets all at once. A thousand flickering skylines. Her hands feel too warm as they make contact with the exposed skin of his waist. He can't

remember the last time a kiss felt so loud and so silent. Like a jet breaking the sound barrier. Like a glacier moving across the ocean. They're pressed together so tightly, her arms now twined around his neck, his looped around her waist. At some point, he feels himself picking her up, alive with the feeling of her legs wrapped around his waist again. He sets her on the desk and feels his lips curving up to match hers as she recalls the exact same memory. It feels like a homecoming.

The way she pulled him closer to her by his tie.

The way her lashes glowed in the dawn's light.

The curve of her smile in the dark of the evidence locker.

The curve of her smile copied onto his skin.

They watch the sunrise from the balcony, wrapped in a stranger's sheets.

Notes for the Chapter:

I've been stuck with the idea of Steve and Kali loving each other despite the "cop/robber" dynamic.

Hope you enjoy

Author's Note:

Super rich kids with nothing but loose ends. Super rich kids with nothing but fake friends. You'd imagine it'd be harder to break into a Gold Shore penthouse.

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Hope you enjoy